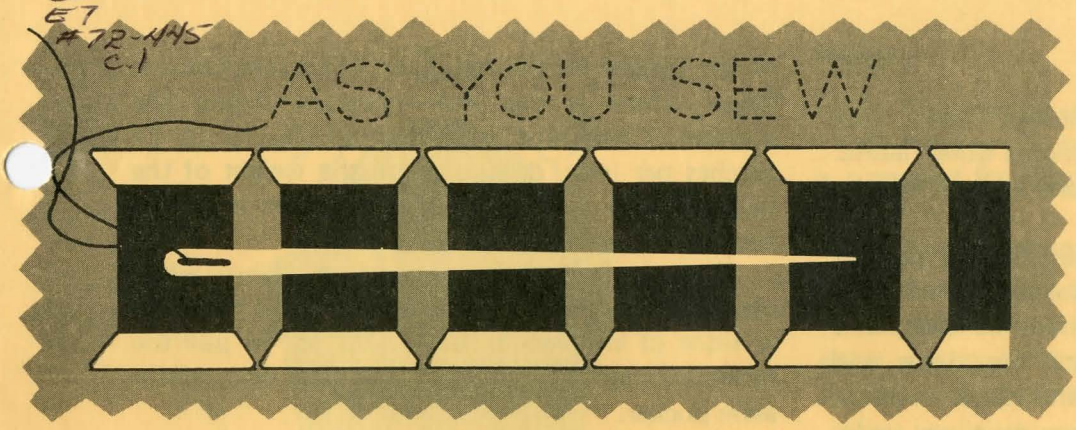
1972

EC72-445 Durable Press

Gerda Petersen



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DURABLE PRESS

Gerda Petersen
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What is Durable Press?

Durable Press (Permanent Press) is the result of the quest for a perfect fabric. A fabric that could be machine washed and require no ironing. One that could be worn all day and still look fresh and free of wrinkles.

Some synthetic fiber knits and woven crepes met these standards. Durable Press, however, usually refers to chemically treated and heat cured fabrics produced from blends of cellulosic fibers such as cotton or rayon and synthetics such as nylon, polyester or acrylic.

At first 100% cotton was used but the fabric was weakened by heavy use of resins and high heat required for Durable Press. The solution to this was a synthetic such as polyester blended with cotton. This added greater strength and resistance to abrasion.

A new process, "Ameriset," is unique in that the fabric is not treated with chemicals or resins. The process uses a vapor treatment applied to finished garments in a gas chamber. The finished garment is treated after it is cut, sewn, pressed and ready to wear. All of the findings, thread, pockets, trimmings and even zippers are treated at the same time and take on the Durable Press characteristics of the shell fabric.

It is possible that "Ameriset" equipment may be installed in neighborhood stores to service the home-sewing market.

Problems With Durable Press

1. Offensive odor from improper curing. Odors can sometimes be removed by washing.
2. Difficulty in removing greasy or oily stains because polyesters have affinity for these substances. A "soil release" finish which loosens stains is being used by some companies.
3. Garments of Durable Press have permanently set creases and flat seams that cannot be changed. Therefore garments can be made smaller or shorter but cannot be made larger or longer.
4. Any distortion of fabric grain will be permanent. It is not possible to straighten fabric grain. It is important to check the straightness of the fabric grain before buying fabric, especially plaids and prints.

Sewing And Caring For Durable Press Fabric

Selecting a Pattern

1. Choose a pattern with few seams or intricate details. If possible choose one with seams that are cut slightly on the bias rather than straight to avoid puckering.
2. Dolman, kimono or raglan sleeves are good. If the sleeve is a set-in type use a minimum of ease.
3. Pleats and darts give ease with less appearance of bulk than do gathers.

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Selecting Interfacings, Zippers

1. Choose interfacings, linings, etc., that require the same care in handling as outer fabric. Self fabric may sometimes be used for interfacings, pocket linings, etc.

2. Choose zipper with synthetic or high percent synthetic blended tapes. Preshrink before stitching into garment. If cotton tapes must be used, it is especially important to preshrink the zipper and gently add ease when stitching the zipper in place.

3. Choose thread that has low shrinkage under washing and ironing conditions. Choose the smallest thread diameter that will still provide enough strength. Polyester and nylon threads are fine and more resistant to wear. Stitches can be set when pressed or ironed.

Laying the Pattern and Cutting

1. Make alterations in pattern before cutting to avoid ripping.

2. Fabric that is off-grain is set permanently and can't be straightened. Lay the straight grain marking of pattern on lengthwise grain of fabric, parallel to selvage and disregard crosswise grain. Cut off-grain fabrics singly instead of on the fold.

3. Press out center fold of fabric if possible, otherwise work around the crease as you lay the pattern.

4. Use sharp dressmaker pins, needles and sharp shears. Beware of tearing durable press fabric. It may tear in the opposite direction from the one you desire.

5. Transfer pattern markings by using tailor's chalk or tailor's tacks. If dressmaker's tracing paper is used, buy the kind whose marks can be removed by washing or dry cleaning. Make a test marking on a scrap of fabric before using it on the garment. Be sure to make markings on the wrong side of the fabric.

Construction Techniques

1. Baste by hand or pin outside stitching to prevent making tiny holes in fabric when basting is removed.

2. Use a fine sharp sewing machine needle for lightweight fabrics. A heavier fabric will require a heavier needle.

3. Make a test seam using strips of fabric of equal lengths about 8" long. Place one strip exactly over the other and sew a seam down the middle. If bottom fabric is shorter than the top, the pressure on the presser foot is too great. If bottom fabric is longer, there is too little pressure. Adjust the pressure. Check the length of stitch (10 to 14 stitches per inch, depending on the weight of the fabric). Check tension. A looser tension is usually needed.

4. Apply a little tension on the fabric when stitching by placing one hand behind and the other in front of the needle. Be careful not to pull the fabric through the machine. This will help relieve seam pucker.

5. Sew at a moderate, even speed. If stitching with a zigzag machine, use the throat plate with the round hole to prevent drawing fabric into the hole.

6. If slipperiness is a problem, stitch on tissue paper.

7. Plan for a generous seam allowance which could be finished to prevent fraying by turning seam edge under and stitching, or by hand overcasting, or by zigzagging.

8. Distribute the fullness evenly in the hem by using an ease stitch. A hem finish that doesn't require a seam tape will be less conspicuous.

9. Setting in sleeves without puckers requires careful handling.

a. Fabrics with little pliability require less sleeve ease. Changes in sleeve ease are made in the pattern. One suggestion is to take a ¼" fold across the sleeve cap above the notches. It may be necessary to lengthen the shoulder seam to compensate for the amount removed from sleeve cap. This adjustment is good for all except those who have a fleshy upper arm.

b. Another way to remove excess ease is by subtracting the measurement of the armhole stitching line from sleeve stitching line. You can determine how much ease is allowed in the pattern. About 1½" of sleeve ease can be fitted into the armscye. To remove the excess ease from sleeve, fold and pin tiny darts from seam edge in bias area of sleeve. Never eliminate all of the ease.

c. Stitch a line of ease stitching on 5/8" seam line from back notch to front notch of sleeve, using 8 to 10 stitches per inch (depending on weight of fabric). Draw up bobbin thread and distribute ease evenly in bias area. Top of sleeve cap (for a distance of about 1½") should be smooth. Here the fabric grain is straight. **(Fig. 1)**

d. Press ease line on the sleeve, using a tailor's ham or pressing mitt.

e. Pin sleeve into armscye and baste.

f. Stitch on top of ease stitch.

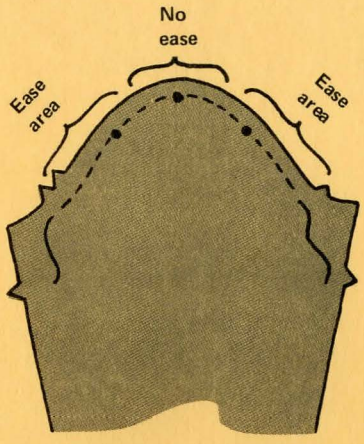

Fig. 1

g. Stitch from back notch to underarm seam to front notch and around rest of sleeve.

h. Make extra row of stitching 1/8" to 1/4" from first row under the arm between notches. **(Fig. 2)**

i. Trim close to underarm seam from notch to notch. **(Fig. 3)**

j. Trim rest of seam allowance to 3/8" if fabric doesn't fray badly. If fabric is heavy it may be necessary to grade this seam. **(Fig. 3)**

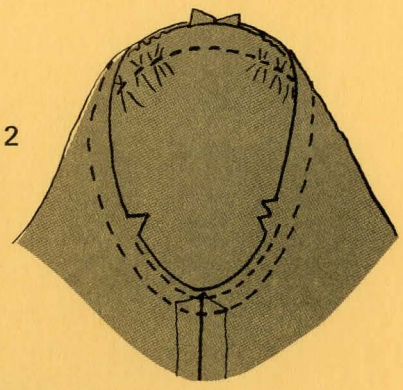

Fig. 2

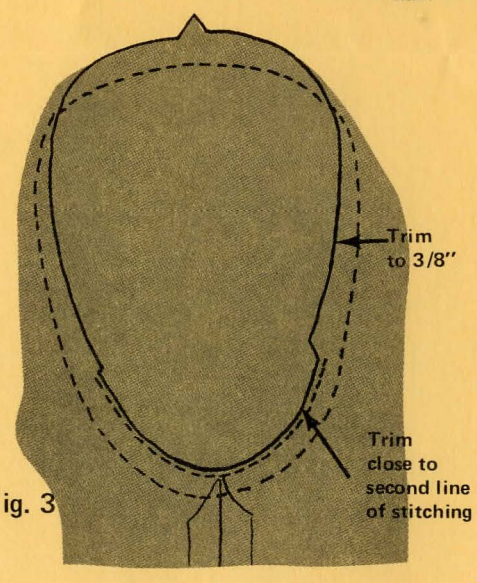

Fig. 3

Pressing

1. Test iron on scrap of cloth.
2. Press as you sew, using iron temperature that is suggested for fiber in a blend that is most easily harmed by heat.
3. Press on wrong side.
4. For final pressing use higher iron temperature where sharper creases are desired. Use either a press cloth or paper so Durable Press fabric doesn't stick to the iron.

Care for Durable Press Fabrics

1. Wash before garments become heavily soiled and stained.
2. Durable Press has fibers (polyesters) that have an affinity for absorbing oil and grease. Some fabrics have a soil release finish added, which makes it easier to remove grease and soil. Greasy stains will need some pretreatment before laundering. This might be done by using a solvent. Another method is to moisten greasy stains with water and then rub soap or detergent into the stain. Wait 30 minutes to 60 minutes before washing.
3. Don't overcrowd the washer.
4. Wash like fabrics together. If several kinds are combined they may pick up lint and color from each other. Turn garments wrong side out when washing.
5. For moderate soil, cool water and detergent are effective and produce the least amount of wrinkling. Heavier soil requires warmer temperature but will cause more wrinkles.
6. Slower machine agitation means less wrinkling.
7. Use oxygen bleaches. Chlorine should not be used unless label on fabric says it is safe, it may cause yellowing.
8. Fabric softener in last rinse reduces static electricity. Fabric softener should not be used each time the garment is washed. Most fabric softeners have a wax type finish which lessens absorbency if they are used each time a fabric is washed. They also gradually cause the fabric to collect (redeposit) soil.
9. A dryer with low to medium temperature is most effective for drying Durable Press. As soon as the dryer stops, remove garment and hang it on a hanger. Dryers that have a "cool down" cycle also help prevent wrinkles in a garment.

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